

1998

## Exile Vol. XLV No. 1

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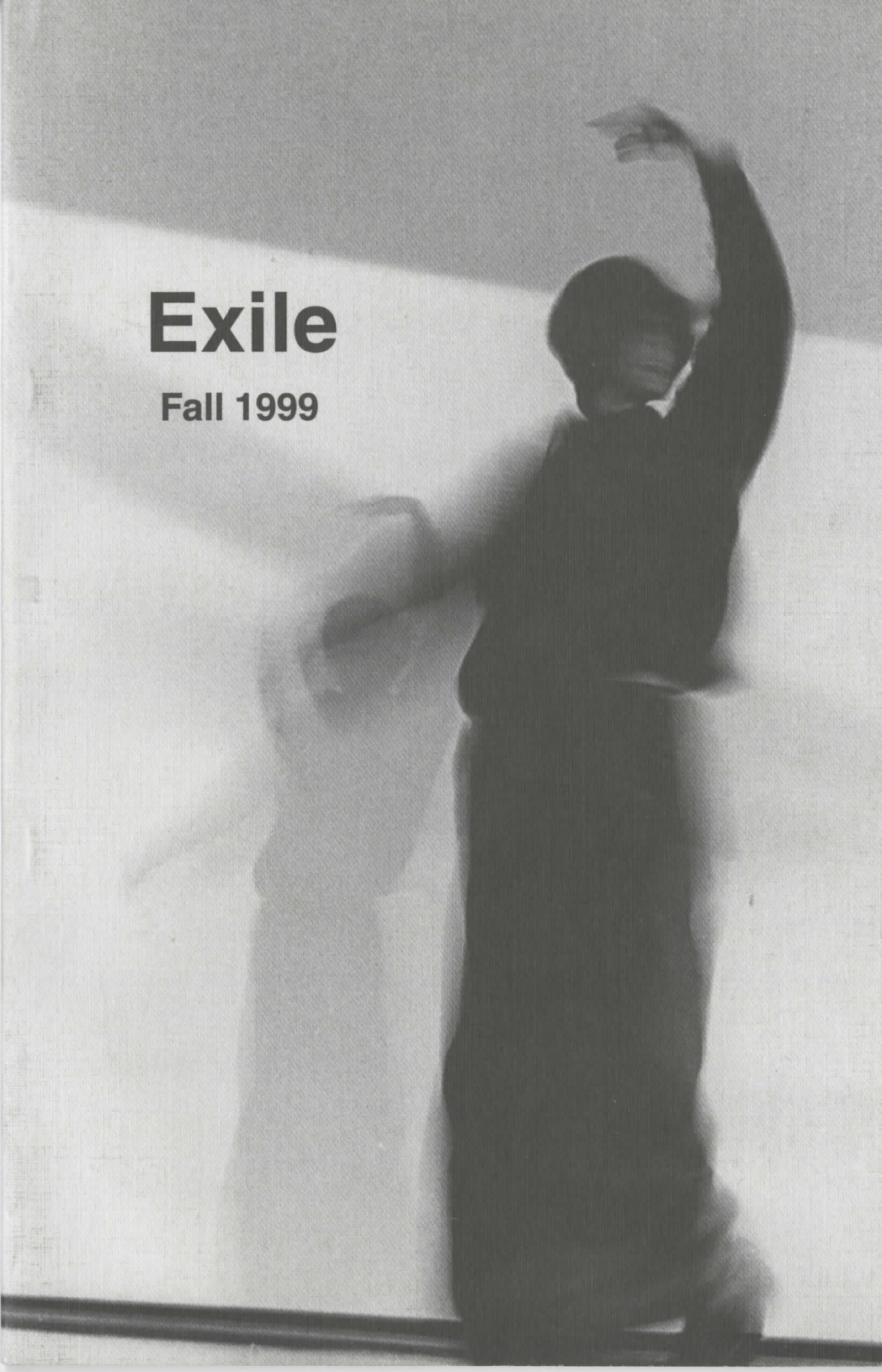
## Exile Vol. XLV No. 1

### **Authors**

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# Exile

Fall 1999



# **Exile**

**Denison University's  
Literary and Art Magazine**

**44th Year  
Fall Issue**



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You of the finer sense,  
Broken against false knowledge,  
You who can know at first hand,  
Hated, shut in, mistrusted:

Take thought:  
I have weathered the storm,  
I have beaten out my exile.

—Ezra Pound

### Statement of Policy

This semester *Exile* instituted a new policy limiting submissions to those not involved in the production of the magazine. As always, all submissions are reviewed on an anonymous basis, and all editorial decisions are shared equally among the members of the Editorial Board.

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*"Incredible Lines" by David Tulkin '01*

## Wednesday

Underneath the jackets and sweaters,  
 at the open collars of shirts,  
 nestled in the push  
 of breasts, there are crosses,  
 suddenly. There are more people  
 bowing their heads over meals, serving  
 up portions of fish with reverence,  
 like a child to a god. For days  
 this will continue,  
 and when the heavy spring rains  
 break the nubs of flowers  
 from their stalks, flow  
 earth together like a river, the crosses  
 will disappear into drawers  
 and cedar boxes on the top shelf  
 of closets.

But you, brother,  
 will wear that smooth pewter  
 to the Persian Gulf, tangled  
 with your dog tags. The swathed  
 desert bodies you bear to the ground  
 with a whip of your gun  
 will remind you of the people countries  
 and gods away, stumbling  
 from stunned church doors,  
 their foreheads blurred with ash.

—Mary Ann T. Davis '00

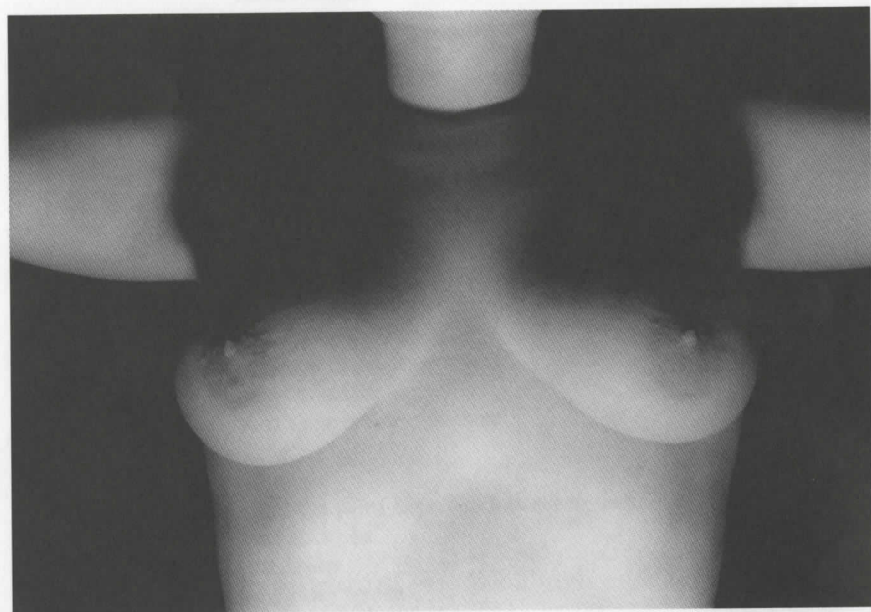
## Music

light wavers along  
 the line of the window frame  
 an imprint  
 of branches  
 brushed onto the sill  
 still moving  
 trapping my eye  
 while the kindled  
 record sounds  
 grit my thoughts  
 Grandmother tried to teach me  
 piano  
 but the rhythm  
 was trapped in my fingers  
 stiff and smothered  
 you see it there still trembling  
 you stare it down  
 try to leash it under your arm  
 though I tell you  
 I am no musician  
 that I am no songster  
 I cannot make your sound  
 or your mind  
 I can only paint over these  
 keys  
 in blue  
 until the paint drips down between them  
 and sticks in  
 the levers  
 and dries on the  
 strings  
 into one blue mass of  
 melody and I can take your  
 hands in it  
 and print them along the walls  
 and the glass  
 of the  
 window

until the light comes in blue  
 and prints  
 color  
 on my face

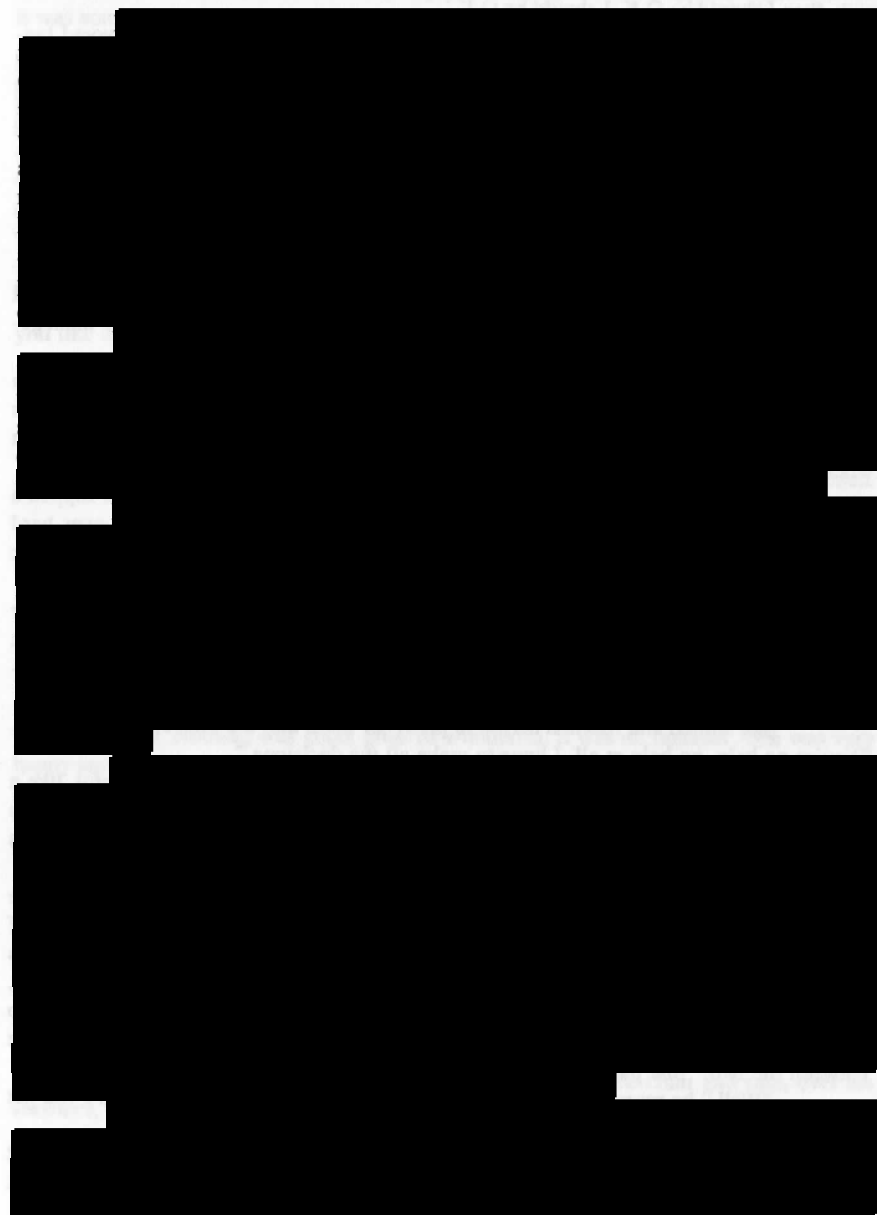
—Jessica Kramer '03





*"Untitled" by David Tulkin '01*

## Storm Drain

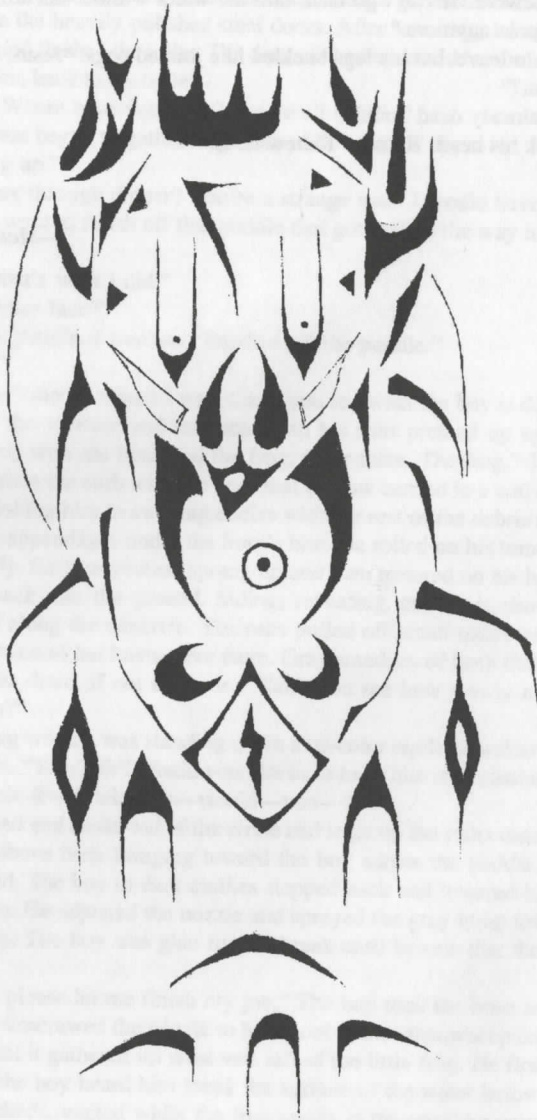


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"Untitled" by Patrick Yingling '03

## Worship During the Rainy Season

When the air conditioner cycled on and off  
through the humidity and the dog next door ran  
panicked circles on his tether, I walked the half  
mile to the pool. The life guard straddled a thick post,  
surveying the middle-school girls with squinty eyes  
hidden behind dark glasses. It smelled like melted ice  
cream and hot concrete, mixed  
among

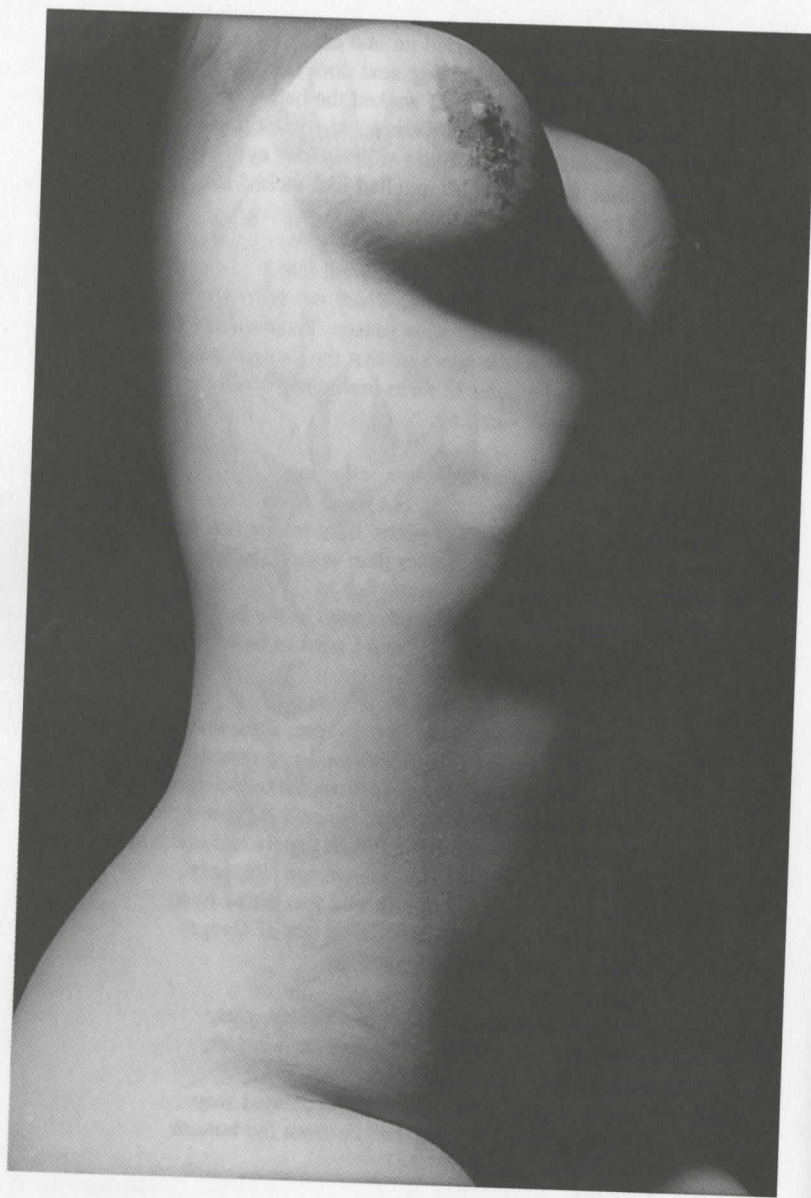
ash, waves and ripples descending into  
sediment thirty feet down, where the stairs shifted  
like teeth during the rainy season. They walked miles  
to Kashi, where it was said that the Ganges could  
cleanse the murder of three brahmins. When the water  
rose to Shiva's ceiling,  
they dove

from ten feet into the glass reflecting  
sunlight in tiny peaks radiating out from  
sun-screened limbs. I had the penny tight in one fist, let  
my eyes sting in the haze, cooler than sweat. Shallows-  
stead, I pitched copper in a careful arc to  
splash at the break, half the length away. In the burst  
of swimming it flicked quickly, and I tried to beat  
it to the ear-splitting  
blue depths

of the temple doorway. Somewhere, somewhere  
under the thrust of the flood, the *linga* rested  
in sandstone, and they dove from the banks with one  
huge breath to sink and pull beneath the threshold, long  
enough to paw through Sanskrit papers and touch stone,  
the shaft. It was the first pilgrimage site, only  
one flooded—the scripture said that Shiva lived  
in these temples like sun filling jars of Ganges  
water, shining, spread far  
apart

for the final kick to reach and stretch, clasp  
the penny with cold fingers. My lungs sang louder,  
beginning a chant and inward suck, pulling far  
down and in. I pushed hard against the painted stripe,  
burning now, shooting fast up from the bottom  
to surface, sudden light.

—Allison Armbrister '01



*"Sculpted Body" by David Tulkin '01*

## Creases

He sits in the oak pew with his hands crossed, thumbs circling one another. His forearms rest on his black pants. His wife slowly runs her hand from his shoulder to the middle of the crease on his back, to the top of the pew behind him. His eyes burn dry; they have not been closed for hours, except for the occasional blink that interrupts his glare. The previous night, he sat in the dark of the study upon a cold tacked leather chair, writing a letter his wife would find this evening.

"The lyrics are beautiful, aren't they?" his wife asks.

"Oh yes, they're nice," he says.

"Don't forget the McAllisters are coming over for brunch and their daughter can't eat eggs," she says.

"What?"

"Do you remember the first Resurrection Sunday we spent together in North Carolina?"

He nods and thinks of his wife's scattered nature and inability to list her comments in decreasing order of importance.

The preacher rises from his watch and the special music of the Dial Sisters fades. "Rebirth," he says on this first Sunday in April, and, "Redemption." To be brought out of sin into light.

Into right? He wonders. He looks back at his wife, at the innocence of her curved lips. She smiles, crosses her ankles, and puts her other arm around their youngest child, Lauren.

He thinks about her birth, the last of the three children. About how he felt new at the first sight of her. She was so light, four pounds, six ounces, so small. He thinks about her ribboned-blond hair and the dimple on her right cheek. She is five now and growing, free-spirited and trusting, and he worries. She once asked him if Jesus got cold on the cross as he was wearing what seemed to be underwear. Was Jesus ever less than warm?

He wonders if they will be warm in Utah. He wonders about temperature and elevation. He wonders if the salt lake is salty. Just he and his little girl.

Lauren crawls over her mother's lap and curls up in her father's. "My eyes hurt." She moves her head back and forth on his chest, fighting it off. He helps her to find a more comfortable position and she sleeps, giving in to her drowsiness. She too had been up late the evening prior. She could not sleep. He heard her small feet stick to the wood floors, softly creeping towards the dim light of the study. Because she is brave, she opened the door without fear of the darkness engulfing the house, crawled up into her father's lap, and fell asleep after asking him to tell her the story of the gnomes. With his daughter resting in the boughs of his arms, he feels whole and without error. To understand his boys, to play the role of the loving father, is not what he had once thought it to be.

He bows his head and breathes in her hair that smells of lilies. She looks so much like her mother, but he wants to be near her anyway. His little girl has yet to discover that her father has not won all battles, nor been valiant in all situations, and cannot always dispel what is harmful to her with a single kiss.



\*\*\*

Crease to crease, he refolds the starched-white cotton, palms to bed. The arms cross at forty-five degree angles and he folds the base of the shirt, the last six inches. Bent at the waist, he feels the strain of his stance and straightens. His movement has a certain grace but is not yet fluid. A grace he is learning, not one with which he was born. Along the tightly woven threads, he inspects the cohesion and order, made by the hand of an American.

He thinks of his father and his stories of the World War I days. His father, a drill instructor, was preparation, was force, was command. The folded shirt shows the work of his young wife's delicate hands, the faint mistakes of misplaced creases. His wife, he thinks, was made in Georgia, crafted by the hands of relentless southern nobility, and yet she falters.

He pulls the shirt wrinkled across his stomach to a smooth plane, aligning the row of buttons that cross his chest and the zipper of his pants. He remembers his father's words, "There is nothing if there is no order. God himself created it."

He finishes packing his white shirts, blue pants, and oxfords. He thinks of his mother cowering in the corner of the kitchen on Fridays when his father would return from the base.

Each day that passes reflects the next. Order. He must maintain order and precision. He thinks of playing baseball with his friends at the ballpark on the base in Texas, of how each child of seven or eight was so intimately tied to the rules that fights would inevitably ensue.

His new bride enters the bedroom. He softly kisses her, forgiving her carelessness, suppressing the need to point out the flaw of her work.

"Two months?" she asks.

"Only two months this time."

"We're fortunate then?"

"Very," he kisses her once more, only this time on her forehead, picks up his bags, and leaves.

\*\*\*

About mid-July his oldest son comes home from an afternoon playing ball with some older kids. He asks the inevitable question. Because he is 11, they sit on the tail of the truck. The boy asks and his father survives and, to his surprise, he fumbles very little. He knows that he is the father, that is the way things are supposed to be.

His five-year-old daughter, Lauren, through the window of the dining room, sees them. She asks her mother if she too can have some time to ask him a very important question. Taken completely by surprise, her mother consents with a smile. Her smile releases her obligation for the explanation.

His son goes around the back of the house to play with his brother and Lauren walks out to the truck. He pulls her up to the tail and follows, positioning himself, bracing himself.

She sits for a moment with her hands on her dirty knees. She looks at the bush

for several moments and he becomes weak, but hangs on to the strand of hope that she will lose interest.

Then she speaks. "Daddy, where do cows come from?" she asks. The serious nature of her question is apparent in her eyes and her flushed cheeks.

He releases a deep sigh, wound tightly within, relieving the tension.

\*\*\*

'Eight,' they had said, 'so, meet us there at seven-thirty.' He put his two boys to bed after telling them the promised story. He looked at his wife, taking in the depth of her beauty, and kissed her. He thought about the raspberries she tasted of, reminding him of their 10th anniversary that they had just celebrated.

"By 10?" she asks.

"By nine-thirty."

Behind the red taillights of another car, he pulled out onto the road. He would assume the role of follower, he thought, driving through their neighborhood. No, he was not following, only looking for a place to exist. A place to just be. On the seat next to him, a bag of sheets slid towards him, creased in symmetrical lines. He patted the black duffel bag and kept one hand on the wheel in the swelling darkness.

"Glad you could make it," said a fellow marine officer.

He nodded and stepped behind his car to put on the robes. The PA system methodically broke each versus, each chorus of the Baptist hymns raining down upon the rally. He surfaced into the circle unarmed, lit only by a single bulb, in full dress. Behind the two carefully cut holes of the sheet, he saw their emblem in bright red letters.

Noticing that he was alone in his sheets except for the man in red, he said with a half smile, "No sheets?"

The officer pulled him aside and said, "No sheets, there are never any sheets. Cloaks, they're called cloaks and we're not wearing any tonight."

Several armed men guarded the edge of the light. He walked towards them, taking off his headpiece, and spotted two small figures on the hill behind them. Hidden enough to be any race, small enough to be children. One was much shorter and had longer hair than the other. He stood, eyes fixed on their still shadows. They must have seen him seeing them. They ducked into the tall grass.

He stood watching their fading shadows. He imagined them to be brother and sister, sneakily going against their father's orders to remain in the house for the rest of the evening. For one evening, they broke free, he thought.

His eyes adjusted to the darkness and he saw the silhouettes of armed men, mirroring the armed men in the light. The Lumbees. He knew that the Klan was not invading anyone's official property, but they were just outside an all Native American town.

He knew them not to be harmless spectators. He thought of the Trojan horse, of surprise attacks, though he did not fear their wrath raining down upon him, the only white-sheeted man.

The local sheriff came out of the darkness into the center of the circle. The crackling hymns like fire broke through his gaze into the dark. The sheriff looked to be



pleading with their red-cloaked leader for several moments. Though most of his words were inaudible, he heard him say, "Inciting," and then disappeared once more into the dark silhouettes.

Inciting. Had he before ever incited anything, he thought.

A gun was fired, the bullet taking out the single bulb. He stood still, listening to the war-whoops of the Indians, to gunfire, to the screaming of a little girl, and to the bass thump of his own heart.

Still facing the hill, he saw the taller child emerge from the hiding places of the grass and move towards the scuffling. He wanted to go to the little boy, protect him, but he knew he was draped in sheets that would do more to frighten than to soothe. He thought of his own children, the two boys about the same size. He thought about his third child still nestled in the womb of its mother. Six more months, he wanted a little girl.

Seeing the familiar pictures of family in front of his face instead of the two unknown children, he lost sight of them. The field, with a red glow hovering about it, was again lit. This time it was by the many taillights of the rallying men as they got into their cars to flee further rioting.

He looked about the field and recognized not one face, though darker ones stood around him. They ripped his neatly sewn sheet to reveal the pressed white shirt and brown slacks. The Indians paraded around the field with the red and white flag and his 'cloak.'

He ran from the field into the wooded area. He ran in the opposite direction of his car, of the road, of his fleeing fellow men. He ran deliberately. He sprinted. He had no desire to instigate, to incite further, he ran because he knew he would be attacked if he remained. He ran because he did not wish to go home.

—Stephanie M. Vaccaro '01



"Untitled" by Tanya Sheremeta '01

## Mercy

### I.

Imagine that life ends  
after him. So your days turn  
on the axis of that immaculate  
inhabitation of your body,

a creation so clean and strong  
your other sons fade in the earthly thrust,  
brief cohabitation, that brought  
them from thighs more red-smeared

and unclean than the butterflyed  
ribcages of doves on the altar.  
As the young, jealous god was learning  
mercy through his messiah, you,

years later, resisted falling to ground  
outside of a temple where your son,  
*your son*, was calling, crying *Hate your own  
father and mother and wife and children*

*and brothers and sisters and indeed  
your own life, reject them and come before me.*  
You summon him anyway,  
send word through the shoving

crowd of his waiting family. The strength  
of your bones amazes you  
again when his rejection comes,  
ringing prophesy—

*I have no mother or brothers  
—an example, fictive family  
of light, the sweat from crucifying bodies,  
a dust stirred from tombs by a rising.*

### II.

So have stories filtered  
to a man in Paintville, who sands  
a table one evening,  
sands down to straight edges, rough legs.

He is in the kitchen pouring sun tea  
over crackling ice, trying to assimilate his birth  
from someone now plotted into heavy  
clay, who taught him, without ever saying a word,

to brew tea in the afternoon sun—he watches  
drops slip to the floor from her cracked  
pitcher. Then the knock,  
maybe slight scraping of knuckles on the loose

mesh screen to the back door—  
he sees cornfields embracing  
the sinking light first, then the texture  
of her tears, smells his mother's

lemon lotion—and then he is kneeling  
to scoop up pieces of porcelain.  
The girl enters and helps wipe up the amber  
which spreads across the floor.

When they finally talk, it is shelter she takes  
from a townie's demand for her body,  
her flight as he occupied himself  
with another girl. For now, he strips and shucks

silk from his silver corn, slices yellow  
tomatoes and splays them on a dish; he washes  
his hands, fills a basin, kneels and bathes  
the bare feet of the sacrifice

denied that sits at his hewn table  
with strong knees, slipping tomato seeds  
and flesh into her mouth, axis  
repeated, setting sun lighting her hair.

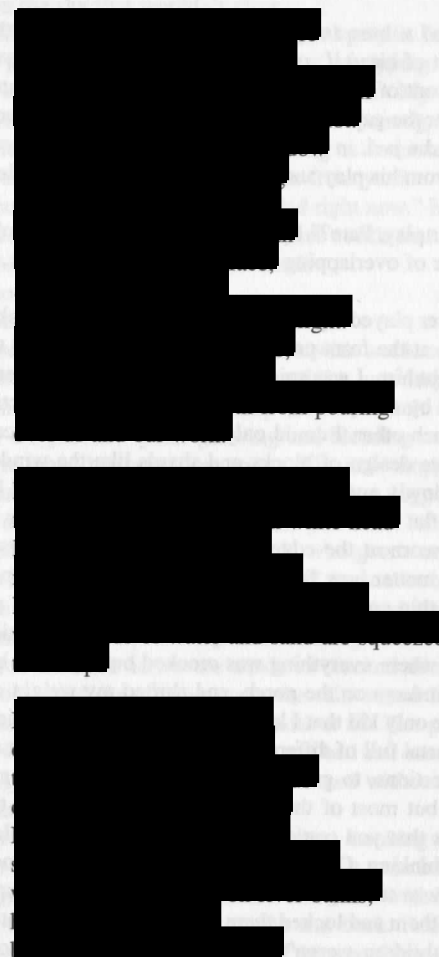
—Mary Ann T. Davis '00





"Untitled" by David Tulkin '01

## Albino Lizard



—Matthew Martz '02

## When It Rains

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]



[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

—Matthew Martz '02

## Filling of Lake Cumberland, 1951

Dad, with his brown elbows folded on his knees and his eyes on the water, calls it names. *That bastard's taken many lives* he says and I sit on the steps

right of him, chewing Teaberry gum like God gave me it just for myself. There's bad stories from all over town—the lady out in Connelly Holler

that didn't know, woke up to the crest at her door, her horse drowned in the bottom-land. Aunt Sam says a lot about that, says the state knows some, it don't know all.

But there'll be stripers in it, and nice long bridges once the metal workers stop slipping through the slats to cover the rocks. That poor lady in Connelly

hadn't been told. I scratch a chigger and feel dark closing around us like leaf fog the first morning of fall, hot enough air to make you pour right out

of your clothes. Dad's still watching water filling up the rusted dusk, talking like it's got a right to. They whispered that she ran a clear mile, it chasing

her the whole way, tack straps floating off her dead horse and her nightdress all wet. Someone from Jamestown Church of Christ gave her a place to dry things out. She's not

a big talker, they say, seems bone-scared and only says that she's bound to fetch her dog, that he's down in that holler with his jaws slack and his fur waving.

—Allison Armbrister '01



*"Untitled" by Dena Behi '01*

## Contributors Notes

Allison Armbrister is a junior from Louisville, Kentucky.

Dena Behi is a junior political science major and french minor from "sunny" Mansfield, Ohio. She likes edible photography, and once won a wet T-shirt contest without ever getting wet.

Mary Ann T. Davis is a senior from Louisville, Kentucky.

Jessica Kramer is a freshman English (writing) major from Louisville, Kentucky, and she loves God, poetry, and chocolate, in that order.

Matthew Martz is a sophomore English (writing) major from Webster Groves, Missouri, and attended Saint Louis University High School.

Tanya Sheremeta is a junior Studio Art major from Rochester, New York. She enjoys watching TV, working with clay, and admires Gustav Klimt.

David Tulkin is a junior philosophy major from San Francisco, California. He enjoys photography because of the realism and ability to manipulate light, contrast and subject, and, this year, he was in the middle of a police chase (but wasn't the one being chased).

Stephanie M. Vaccaro is a junior English (writing) major from Norris, Tennessee. Here's an interesting fact that she wants you to ponder...she sleeps with her eyes half open.

Patrick Yingling is a freshman Taxidermy major, and Gerbil Maintenance minor, from Bainsbridge, Ohio. His favorite medium is ballpoint pen, he likes to sit around, and he was abducted by aliens.

## Editorial Board

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